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VIII.

THE NORSE MEETING.

OPENING OF THE SESSION OF 1874-'75.

There was a full attendance of the Fellows at Association Hall on the evening of November 23, 1874.

Chief-Justice DALY, on rising to open the Session of 1874-'75, said:

In opening our meeting it is my melancholy duty to refer to the loss we have sustained during the past summer in the death of our venerable ex-President, Mr. Henry Grinnell. I shall not at present enter upon any lengthened account of his life and services, as it is due to his relation to the Society, the country, and to the geographical world that a memoir should be prepared by a committee, with adequate resolutions, and submitted on a future occasion. Mr. Grinnell was one of the founders of this Society. It was to his efforts, together with those of the late George Folsom, that the first step was taken a quarter of a century ago for the establishment of the Society, and at the meeting at which it was organized, in 1851, he was elected President — a position which, with his characteristic modesty, he declined. But when Mr. Bancroft had been chosen President he consented to serve as first Vice-President, a position which he held for many years. When the late Dr. E. L. Hawks withdrew from the Presidency, Mr. Grinnell consented to accept the position, and served during the years 1862-'3, when he declined a re-election, and I became his successor. He still continued, however, his active relations with the Society, taking the liveliest interest in all its proceedings, and was present last winter at the public reception given by the Society to the crew of the *Polaris*, when he brought with him an unfolded flag which he had originally sent on the Wilkes' expedition to the Antarctic, and which he afterward sent four times to the Arctic in the respective expeditions of DeHaven, Kane, Hayes and Hall. It is to him we

owe the first American expedition to the Arctic. He furnished and provisioned the two vessels for the expedition of DeHaven in search of Sir John Franklin, which started in May, 1850. In conjunction with the late George Peabody he manned and provisioned the brig *Advance*, commanded by Dr. Kane in the second expedition of 1853. He was a large contributor to the expedition commanded in 1861 by Dr. Hayes, and he alone furnished the means to send Captain Hall on his first journey to Frobisher's straits in 1860 in search of Sir John Franklin. It was also chiefly through his instrumentality that Hall was able to make his second journey in 1863, in which he passed five years on the scene of his previous explorations. It was to the means, in fact, which he supplied that Hall obtained the experience and training which led Congress to confide to him the command of the *Polaris* in the last expedition. In that beautiful poem of Campbell's written on a blank leaf of La Perouse's voyages, there is an expressive couplet suggested by the strait through which the French navigator passed on the coast of Japan, and which bears his name. It is in these words:

Fair Science on the ocean's azure robe
Still write his name in picturing the globe.

And so it has been and will be with Henry Grinnell. In that long line of coast known as Grinnell Land, which, beginning in Smith's sound, extends along the west side of Kennedy's channel, his name is imperishably written, and will remain forever a monument to his enterprising spirit, the benevolent feeling, the broad and generous aspiration of an American merchant. The present evening is devoted to hearing two of our Fellows who have just returned from expeditions to the north of Europe; Dr. Hayes, who went to represent our Society at the one thousandth celebration of the founding of Society in Iceland, and M. Du Chaillu, who has followed up his travels in Norway and Sweden by further explorations in Lapland. It is very gratifying thus to have the reports brought by our own workers.

ICELAND'S MILLENNIAL — DR. HAYES' REPORT.

After a brief preliminary address, Dr. Hayes said:—

We arrived at Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, in due season to take part in the first ceremonies, August 2. Meanwhile the King of Denmark, Christian IX, had arrived, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and France being represented by ships of war. The occasion was one of unanticipated dignity and ceremony. The people were, however, impressed with the importance of the occasion, that the display

was not in excess of their expectations, and they bore their part in it with the traditional and high breeding of their Norse ancestry. Our credentials being delivered to the proper authorities, we were courteously received, and situations were assigned us in accordance with rules previously laid down for the reception of the representatives of learned societies. These were always near His Majesty the King, the Governor of the island, and the Mayor of Reykjavik. The formal occasion embraced divine service, the cathedral rival proceedings at Thingvalla, and two public banquets. The cathedral services were very impressive. A native hymn, called "Iceland's Thousand Years," was sung by the entire congregation with marvelous effect. The music was fine, the voices excellent, and the occasion being one of deep feeling to every Icelander, it is not surprising that there was exhibited a deep emotion. Never before have a people celebrated the thousandth anniversary of an organized government, substantially following the organic plan, and certainly it would be impossible, at the present time, for any other people to celebrate, in this sense, its millennial and claim consistently to preserve its language, laws, and social customs practically unimpaired by the lapse of time. After the church services the King, at his banquet, arose and drank prosperity to the future Iceland; a hundred cannon echoed the sentiment, and amid the wildest enthusiasm the new constitution was proclaimed. This gives Iceland practical freedom from Denmark, and no doubt it will tend greatly to develop the country, which possesses many resources needing cultivation to make them profitable. At present the chief exports are codfish, salmon, and wool. While the cultivation of these industries does not create any large degree of individual wealth, they are productive of general competency. I found the necessaries of life possessed everywhere in abundance; luxuries were not uncommon, and the people were happy and content. The school system is most admirable, and the Icelanders show a remarkable greed for learning. In the humblest peasant hut you always find books. Some of our English classics are translated and published in Reykjavik, and are greatly in demand. The bookstore was crowded when I visited it. Crime is almost unknown, the common jail not having had an occupant, except the jailer and his family, these twenty years past; not indeed until this last summer, when the King's staff used it as head-quarters. Reykjavik contains about seventeen thousand inhabitants, and is mainly composed of comfortable frame houses, roofed with slate, and surrounded by little gardens, in which are cultivated potatoes, cabbage, and other common garden vegetables. None of the cereals, not even barley and oats, will ripen, though it

is said they were grown there in former times. The fruits mentioned in the ancient Sagas have wholly disappeared, if we except the low stunted birch and willow bushes, which, however, are not found near the coast. The timber needed, even for the small farm-houses of the interior, is brought from Norway. Yet the bush supplies a sufficiency of fuel in those places, while near the coast, as at Reykjavik, peat alone, of which there are exhaustless beds, is the only fuel, except occasional supplies of English coal. The present aspect of the island is that of a forestless girdle of green, inclosing a volcanic desert, and inhabited by about seventy thousand people. This girdle is in places but a few miles wide, but in others it extends for a considerable distance up the valleys, such as those, for instance, through which flow the Heita (white) and Thorso rivers. In the valley of the former are found the Geysers, long famed as the most remarkable spouting springs known in the world, until Prof. Hayden's recent discoveries in the Yellowstone region. These I had the good fortune to visit and examine with minute care. The full details of my measurements and investigations there I feel could not be crowded into the short space of time allotted to me this evening, and I reserve them, therefore, for another occasion. The Stroker Geyser spouted quite two hundred feet for our benefit.

The famous Lagborg, where the Allthings met, presents even a more grand and fearful appearance than the old sagas describe. Our reception here will long be remembered, taking place as it did by the side of the rising waterfall of the famed Oxara river, and beneath the giant-frowning lava cliffs of the Almanagja. My companions during this somewhat singular reception were, besides Mr. Field, Mr. Bayard Taylor, Mr. Murat Halstead, Professor Kneeland, Mr. Gladstone, and Professor Ericker Magnusson, a native Iclander. From all these I met with the heartiest co-operation. At one time it was hoped our friend, Mr. Paul du Chaillu, would join us; but that eminent traveler seems on the whole to prefer to travel alone, and perhaps he is wise; and, judging by his mind, you would certainly say so, for, whether sweltering in the malarial jungles of Africa, or drinking in the glories of the land of the mid-night sun, he is ever an active observer of men and things, and I am rejoiced to be associated here to-night in the general illustration of Norseland with one who has done so much to promote our knowledge of strange places, and to deserve in its best sense the title of traveler.

LAPLAND — M. DU CHAILLU'S REPORT.

In the north of Europe there is a large tract of country very thinly inhabited by Swedes, Norwegians, Finlanders, and Laps. Its coast is indented by numerous fiords of great beauty, the sea being of great depth, and winding its way inland, often in the midst of stupendous scenery. These fiords were dug out of the solid rock by glaciers on their way toward the sea. The geological features of that country impress the mind with the great and constant changes that have taken place, or are taking place. The rocks are granite, gneiss, and mica schist. As one studies the coast line, the eyes rest continually on series of terraces one over the other, perfect in shape, almost all situated at the entrances of valleys. These terraces show distinctly by their rounded pebbles the rising of the land above the water, this slow and almost imperceptible rising still taking place in our time. This country was once under the influence of a much milder climate, as genial as that of England now. We must conclude from inferences that the icy period is making again its appearance, and that that impenetrable belt of ice which seems to bar the way to the North Pole, and which our distinguished member, Dr. Hayes, has partly explored, was once an open sea. In the interior of the country, inhabited by Laps, one meets everywhere positive proofs of the rising of the land. Shells are found several hundred feet above the present level of the lakes; mountains have been polished as smooth as glass by the action of the ice; bowlders of all sizes have been scattered over the land by the glaciers. Advancing glaciers are demolishing to this day and breaking the granite hills which oppose their march, while the retiring ones leave behind them bowlders, sand, gravel, etc.

There are sea Laps, forest and river Laps, and nomadic Laps. To-night I am only to speak of the nomadic Laps. The whole population of Lapland amounts to about thirty thousand, the nomadic Laplanders numbering about twenty-five thousand, and possessing about five hundred thousand reindeer. Their herds vary from fifty to five thousand. There have been Laplanders possessing even ten thousand reindeer. A man possessing from five hundred to a thousand reindeer is considered rich; those who possess only fifty to one hundred are poor. The reindeer is every thing to the Laplander. With its skin he makes his clothing, shoes, gloves; with its sinews his thread. He feeds on its flesh, and the animal is his beast of burden. The value of a reindeer varies according to the country. Driving reindeer broken to the harness are not very plentiful, and cost from \$10 to \$15 each; a common one from \$4 to \$6. The most

intelligent Laps are the Swedish and Norwegian, compulsory education having reached that distant region. They all know how to read. Every one is or must be confirmed, this ceremony being part of the Lutheran creed; hence all must be able to read the Bible, and know their catechism. Churches are scattered here and there in the desolate regions, and the church-going Laps come into them on Sundays from every side.